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->From the Editor's Keyboard                "Saying it like it is!"
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I think that it's almost safe to say that perhaps Spring has finally decided
to stick around for awhile! It's probably about time since we're already in
May (can you believe it?!). At least I have 99% of the remaining leaves in
my yard cleaned up finally. And, I actually have some flowers coming up in
my gardens. I didn't think they'd ever appear after the beating they took
over the horrendous winter that we had. Then again, nature has a way of
coping with such things. Now I can really look forward to sprucing things
up in the yard and the house. We're doing some research to enlarge our
kitchen this year; so that's starting to get exciting.

I'm sure that there are a few of you who may think that I've been harping
too much about spam lately. And, you may be right. I would guess that the
amount of spam that people get varies from one extreme to the other.
Personally, I get a ton of it daily. And I'm not even sure where my e-mail
addresses are getting "harvested" from these days. But, the stuff is
downright annoying.

Imagine my surprise - to a certain degree - of the number of news articles
that have been appearing regarding spam lately. And this past week, as this
issue will depict, the subject has reached a high level of exposure. It's
not just me, folks! Whether you see it or not, it's reached epidemic
proportions as far as I'm concerned. Once your e-mail address is discovered
in some manner online, you're a potential recipient of this trash. I can't
wait for the day when there's a mechanism similar to the anti-telemarketer
"do not call" lists that force spammers to "do not e-mail" or face monetary
penalties.

Ever think about something and wonder about it but never really follow up on
the thought? Often when I do research for articles for A-ONE, I include,
naturally, Atari-related news. Seriously, news articles pertaining to the
topic of Atari are rare these days. Every once in awhile, I see an article
referencing a couple of music groups: Atari Teenage Riot and the Ataris.
Now, I have to admit that neither group attracted much attention for me, but
I have often wondered how either group was able to include the trademarked
Atari name in the band's name - knowing full well that we also use the Atari
name in our magazine's name. But I've often figured that A-ONE would be
less of a magnet for scrutiny because we don't earn any money from the use
of the name. I'm assuming that these bands do, so there might be some
repercussion. Well, as you'll see below, apparently this hasn't happened.
I just thought it was interesting to see the article as I happened to think

about this topic again earlier in the week, and lo and behold, an article referencing it appears online. Ponder if you will!

Until next time...

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GP32 Atari ST Emulator

Hot on the heels of Atari 2600 emulator announcements, the GP32 handheld is now host to the Atari ST Castaway emulator, courtesy of Jeff Mitchell. Now you can enjoy the many excellent Atari ST games like Dungeon Master on a game system you can take anywhere! For more information (including screenshots) and to download the emulator if you have a GP32, please visit codejedi.com.

http://www.codejedi.com/shadowplan/gp32.html

EasyMiNT 1.5

Hi,

I've released a new version of EasyMiNT, major news are:

- Aranym supported (Thanks to Petr Stehlik)
- Teradesk 2.3 support
- Put together some dialogs and alerts
- XaAES 963 support (because of changing archive structure, only this
  version)
- Network card driver can be copied during installation now
- Added nameserver entry to NIC configuration dialog
- Possibility to install existing rpms only with LST files and
  without TAR packages (Attention! ALPHA)
- put findutils to STANDARD.TAR
- put vim-minimal to STANDARD.TAR
- reworked the TAR packages

You can get it under:

http://atari.st-katharina-apotheke.de

Have fun!

Ataris Say Name Not Causing a Problem

Generally when a band picks a name that's the same as a trademarked product, they can expect the lawyers to come calling. That's not the case for The Ataris.

Singer Kris Roe says they've never had anyone give them a hard time about that name, legal or otherwise. He says "Atari" has such a great nostalgic quality about it and everyone seems to have a good feeling with that name. "Everyone knows what it is and it was a part of everyone's lives and I think that no one really cares. We've never really had any backlash from anybody so we just went on with it," Roe told AP Radio.

Besides, he says if Atari was going to sue, they would have gone after Atari Teenage Riot years ago.

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Mark today down on the calendar because I really don't have a lot to say this week. Other than the fact that I'm over-worked and under-appreciated, there really isn't much to be said.

Of course, I don't try to fool myself into thinking that I'm unique in that respect. It seems that most of us have the same complaints these days. In today's fast paced world, it seems that, by creating a world where we're all 'special' we've managed to make even that 'average'.

Out there, somewhere all alone, is a lone sage looking for 'the one'... the one person among millions of us who ISN'T special. Of course, that, in and of itself, would make him special, wouldn't it? <grin>

Oh, remember a couple of weeks ago when I went off on a rant about local TV news reporters who just weren't equal to the task? Well I got an email from one of them last week. No, not one of the ones that I was actually thinking of when I wrote about it, but someone who's in the same situation and actually realizes it. It was a very nice note, considering the way I hammered on the subject, and provided 'the other side' of the equation.

I don't have a problem with someone who's in over their head and tries to remedy the situation. I have a problem with the ones who aren't even marginally competent at what they do and still think they've got the world by the tail. We've all seen them, most of us can pinpoint them in a matter of moments, and a few of us can evenhandedly point out ways to improve it. Me? All I can do it point out what's wrong without being able to provide helpful recommendations. Hey, that's part of my charm.

Well, let's get to the news, hints, tips, and info available from the usenet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
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Mike Stepansky asks:

"What is the name of that ST software emulator for the Falcon?"

James Haslam tells Mike:

"Backward III. See my website for it....

http://www.users.zetnet.co.uk/jfhaslam/ "

Although he doesn't provide a URL, Martin Tarenskeen adds:

"There is also a more simple program named STE2FALC."

Mark Duckworth asks about running NVDI and FVDI together:

"In the fvdi docs it is noted that fvdi can run alongside nvdi
as long as you:

1) remove the nvdi video drivers
2) run nvdi after fvdi

For my first and only question, which files inside C:\gemsys
pertain to the nvdi video drivers and how can you remove them
such that everything will play nice and be happy?"

Chris Simon tells Mark:

"It's the set of 5 files called NVDIDRV?.SYS.

Be warned though, if you ever need to boot without FVDI but with NVDI, you
need to re-instate them. This is where a boot switcher program comes in
handy! The easiest way I've found to manage it is to create a folder
inside your drivers folder called HIDE then move those files into there.
Then boot with both FVDI and NVDI. Then when the time comes, copy them
back out of there and disable FVDI, then reboot."

Lonny Pursell tells Chris:

"The best way to do this is with a tiny auto folder program that looks
for the fvdi binary, and if it's found renames or moves the nvdi*.sys
files for you. Likewise if not found it could put the files back as they
were.

There is such a program made for nova users already as the nova driver
runs along side nvdi in the same manner. If the source is available it
just needs a tweak."

Jo Even Skarstein tells Lonny:

"Take a look in the download section of http://atari.nvg.org/. I made such
a program for the Nova card years ago, and updated it to support fVDI
when I got my Eclipse. Sources included in the archive."

Thomas Havemeister asks about an AdSCSI micro host adaptor and a big (by
Atari standards) hard drive:

"I want to mount a internal HDD inside of my MEGA ST using the AdSCSI
Micro unit. I have tried it with these HDDs without success:

* Quantum Fireball TM2100S 2G HDD
* IBM DCAS-32160 2G HDD

Both are not working. The Quantum has no parity-disable jumper, so this could be the problem with that one. On the other side I bought especially the IBM which HAS a parity-disable jumper. Also, no success with this one.

This is what happens: Turn on the Mega, the HDD spins on, the FDD-Lights shortly flash up (Disk is not booting!!), then a green desktop appears with no icons and disabled menu items. That's all. I can't use the AdSCSI Utilities, because no drive is available.

Argh!! This is really annoying, because I've bought the IBM on Ebay because it HAS a parity-disable jumper. Could it be, that both HDDs aren't compatible to the AdSCSI Micro??!

Is there a list with HDDs which are reported to work fine?"

Djordje Vukovic tells Thomas:

"I use an IBM disk on a Mega. It is from the DSAS series (540MB) and works very fine, but needed proper configuring before is started to work at all. There is (at least on my disk) a number of jumpers (beside SCSI id) which had to be set. Try to locate data for your disk on the IBM's support site http://www.storage.ibm.com (I did so for my disk)."

Dave Glish adds his recollections:

"I remember having troubles with a Quantum drive in the past when using an original ICD Link adapter. It needed parity disabled and I had to go to the Quantum site. I found a utility there that allowed me to switch off the parity (but had to do it on my IBM system and then install it in the Atari). If you have a smaller SCSI drive try that and see if it works with the adapter. It's possible that the Micro adapter won't work with that size drive."

Dr. Uwe Seimet adds:

"In order to access more than the first GB of a drive you need other SCSI read/write commands than those that can be used for the first GB. ICD compatible adapters support both, so it is very unlikely that the size of the drive matters. In any case you would still be able to access the first GB. If you cannot do even that something else is wrong, which is not related to the drive's capacity.

Some Quantum fireball and some IBM DCAS require the computer to have a SCSI of its own (initiator identification). If this is the case with your drives you can only use them with a LINK96/97 host adapter. Other host adapters do not provide initiator identification.
Before trying anything else ensure that the drives are recognized by a decent ID check, e. g. the one from HDDRIVER, which is also included in the demo version (http://www.seimet.de/atari_german.html)."

Stephen Moss asks about the Atari joystick port:

"I am constructing a Joystick adaptor and as wondering if the Joystick connection on the ST is pin compatible with those on the VCS and 8 bit computers (400/800XL)."

Adam Klobukowski tells Stephen:

"Yes it is. Even extended STE joystick are compatible, just other pins are used."

'Tim' jumps in and asks:

"Good question, what's the deal on STE joystick ports? Are they for extra players or for 1 and 2 players? what kind of joy do they take?"

Stephen tells Tim:

"They accept Paddles (although I've never been entirely sure what they are) and Light Guns (for shooting games) both of which are probably hard to find although Trade in Post may still have some Light Guns. They also accept the Jaguars Jagpad controller although not many games were written to take advantage of these enhanced ports, two of the input pins are for analog X and Y inputs which I think are used by the paddles. Most two player games will use the standard 9 pin input ports (under the keypad), because as mentioned before little software was written to make use of the enhanced ports.

A FAQ about the enhanced ports is located at http://www.gamesx.com/controldata/ejp_faq.htm IIRC it does provide information on how to construct a 4 player adaptor that uses both of these ports for one specific game but I can't remember which game, it also list some games that can use these ports although it is not a complete list as Crown of Creation for the Falcon is not listed. I found that some of the information was not always clear but it provided a useful starting point for information when I wanted to build my Joystick adaptor.

Using both ports together its theoretically possible to read the X/Y/Z output of an Analog PC joystick and have "force feedback" as some of the pins can be used as output (eg as used to strobe the Jagpad) although I don't know if enough power could be sinked/sourced from them to do this, I have not explored this on my adaptor as my main goal was to may it Jagpad compatible.

Does anyone have paddles and know what the circuit for them is or the output type (fixed voltage for charging a capacitor or variable voltage) as it is depends on the type of A to D converter the Falcon uses it will also enable me to know if I can use the analog outputs from my Joystick."

Jo Even Skarstein posts this about MagicMac:

"I've recently rescued seven (!) old Macs from being thrown away at work. They're all Performa 475 with 8Mb RAM and 250Mb disks. They also have ethernet cards and OS 7.5.1. I've upgraded one of them with 20Mb RAM, a real 68RC040 and speeded it up to 33MHz. It's actually quite usable now, especially as it was really easy to get it networked (I'm writing this on the Mac).

It would be cool to run MagiCMac on it, but which version is best suited for this ancient machine? And would I be able to access the network through MacOS (MacTCP)?"

Greg Goodwin tells Jo Even:

"I believe that any version of MMac will work on a Performa/Quadra provided you run Systems 7.5, 7.6, 8.x, 9, or 9.1 (not 9.2 or X).

Grab a copy and give it a try!

I don't know about the network -- I think so, but I've never networked
my Mac (it's on my to do list)."

Lonny Pursell adds:

"You need a package called "stip" that does just that with iconnect, but
if I recall correctly it is not free. I can't remember where to find it."

Well folks, that's it for this week. Tune in again next week, same time,
same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Shoot-Em-Up Sequels Boost Sales!
   """"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""   British Singer Sues Over Likeness!
                                   'Post Mortem'! 'Zelda' the Best!
                                   And more!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News   - The Latest Gaming News!
   """""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

              Shoot-Em-Up Sequels Seen Boosting Video Game Sales

It's a very bad time to be a digital alien or a humanoid zombie.

Two of the most-anticipated video games of 2003 put those much-maligned
life forms back in the cross hairs of PC gamers in a pair of sequel games
-- "Doom III" and "Half-Life 2." Some see those games acting as a catalyst
that could recharge the fortunes of computer gaming after an unprecedented
sales slump last year.

Both games will be featured at the Electronic Entertainment Expo, or E3,
the game industry's annual convention in Los Angeles and the preferred
forum in the $30-billion game industry for building buzz among the
faithful. The show starts on May 12.

While the latest in Sony Corp.'s line of "Gran Turismo" games is expected
to draw attention, and Electronic Arts Inc. is expected to have another
strong show, one focus this year will be on the two PC games with storied
histories and legions of fans.

Whether fending off aliens as the erstwhile scientist Gordon Freeman in
"Half-Life 2" or battling zombies on Mars in "Doom III," it is almost

certain that the most dedicated of PC game players will spend their holidays shooting at something.

Though the growth in the games industry over the last two years has focused largely on the console platforms, the PC game market has plugged quietly along, generating stable revenue for major PC players like EA, Microsoft Corp. and the games unit of Vivendi Universal.

PC gamers lined up at last year's E3 for a preview of Doom III, the latest in a series its creators predicted would be one of the greatest barriers to workplace productivity in history.

"I would say that the PC game market is alive and well," said Steve Koenig, an analyst at market research firm the NPD Group. "Historically speaking, the pendulum of sales momentum tends to swing back toward the PC. The question is how far it will swing back."

For the first time in 2002, Koenig said, PC game revenue fell year-over-year, and in the first quarter of 2003, revenue was down a further 3.5 percent. But the PC game market was still good for $1.35 billion in sales in 2002, he said.

This year, a more thorough preview of Doom III and the first real looks at Half-Life 2 are sure to fire up gamers, ahead of the games' fall retail launches, Jeff Green, the editor of Computer Gaming World, told Reuters.

"I think the bigger news at this point might be Half-Life 2," Green said. "(It's) probably the thing that's going to generate the most buzz and excitement at the show."

But expect plenty of 'oohs' and 'aahs' from Doom III as well, according to David Kushner, author of the book "Masters of Doom," the story of Doom creators John Romero and John Carmack and their company, id Software.

"What Doom III is going to have, from what I've seen and from talking to John Carmack, is just this really, really awesome deployment of lights and shadows," Kushner said.

Sony's racing game "Gran Turismo 3: A-Spec" was a top-seller for more than a year after its release, and the spotlight will be on the new "GT" game at this year's show.

Another key title is expected to be Microsoft's "Halo 2" for the Xbox. Nearly 18 months after its release, the original "Halo" is still the best-selling Xbox game and claims a devoted following.

That legion of fans was sorely disappointed last month when the developers working on "Halo 2" quietly announced that the game would not be released in 2003. But excerpts of the game are to be shown at E3.

"Halo 2 is going to do that for Xbox because there's nothing on the Xbox that comes close to that kind of anticipation," said Dan "Shoe" Hsu, the editor of games magazine Electronic Gaming Monthly.

Hsu said another wild card at the show would be Nintendo Co. Ltd., which has a tradition of strong game lineups at E3, but comes into this year's show under the cloud of disappointing sales for its GameCube console.

"Nintendo this year should be making a smaller splash than they used to," he said. Not much is known about the company's lineup for this year, though

Nintendo has said it will show games including "Pikmin 2" and "Mario Kart Double Dash."

                    Dissecting the Game of 'Post Mortem'

As a storm rages outside an asylum in France, the shifty eyed pathologist neatly sums up the new computer adventure game, "Post Mortem."

"You are discovering the dark side of Paris, Mr. MacPherson" he says to your character, a soft-spoken American private investigator.

The dark side is right. The game begins with a grisly double murder in the swank Hotel Orphee.

An assailant wearing a dagger-nosed white mask bursts into a young couple's room and leaves his decapitated victims still seated on the bed, heads neatly in their laps, a gold coin in each mouth, purple powder on the floor and blood on the walls. The inept Paris police call it a robbery. It will, however, turn out to be much more complicated.

For most of the game, the player controls Gus MacPherson, who has temporarily abandoned his profession and come to Paris hoping to develop his artistic talents.

The wispy-bearded MacPherson has a nervous habit of repeatedly adjusting his glasses. He also has a troubling psychic gift of seeing visions of crimes, which has earned him the nickname "Spooky."

So, when beautiful dark-haired Sophia Blake walks into his studio, images of the Orphee murder flash across MacPherson's mind. Blake says she's the sister of one of the victims and wants the killer found and a missing family heirloom recovered.

Murder mystery computer games are difficult to execute. You can spend hours gathering available clues, but most games have no way of knowing whether the player has properly assembled them into a coherent theory to solve the mystery. It can leave you scratching your head at the end if you've failed to put all the pieces together properly.

"Post Mortem" (Windows, $30) does a better job than most. It adeptly explains things as you go along, giving players plenty of time to absorb the twists and turns, even as more murders take place and an innocent man is arrested.

The story is compelling, the characters are interesting, and there are enough elements to keep you coming back to the game to see how the tale will unfold. "Post Mortem" makes it easy to move around, collect items, check inventory, and save your progress.

The adventure includes several puzzles - from picking a lock to looking for signs of forgery in the complex details of a painting. But, more importantly, it gives players more than one way to solve most problems. In fact, some problems don't really need to be solved at all to complete the game, a major - and welcome - departure from the way most adventures are designed.

Yet, despite all that, there are still too many technical elements of "Post

Mortem" that drag it down to mediocrity.

The game doesn't let you see the documents you've collected. Instead, it shows typed summaries, detracting from the richness of the experience. In some cases, the game won't give you any information at all from the documents you have picked up, or even let you look at them beyond a little icon at the bottom of the screen.

The system for questioning suspects is unnecessarily cumbersome. Instead of providing a simple list of possible questions, "Post Mortem" makes you click on a series of tabs to see your options. Once you've selected a question, you have to listen to MacPherson recite all the dialogue; there's no way to bypass questions you already know or to skip over the often overwrought dialogue you've already heard.

At one point in mid-game, players transmogrify from MacPherson into a totally different character - a French private investigator. Before the change, as MacPherson, I tried to get into the safe of the French P.I. Yet, even after I became the Frenchman, I couldn't gain access to my own safe.

What annoyed me most of all, however, were the sounds in the background, especially during my second visit to the pathologist's asylum. I kept hearing snippets of songs that seemed to be coming from a distant radio. That was okay in the asylum - after all, some of the patients might have had radios. But I kept hearing the same musical sounds when I ventured into the deserted house of a banker, an ancient crypt, and a subway storage room - places that clearly would not have had a radio. Eventually, the sounds became so distracting I turned off my speakers.

So the post mortem on "Post Mortem" is that this computerized mystery is better than most, with flashes of brilliance, though offset by signs of sloppiness.

Give it a B-.

"Post Mortem" is rated for mature audiences because of its suggestions of blood, gore, violence and sexual themes.

Magazine, TV Channel Vote 'Zelda' Games Best Ever

It has inspired legions of fans and generated hundreds of millions of dollars for its creators, and according to a panel of experts, the "Legend of Zelda" video game series now ranks as the best of all time.

A panel of writers from Entertainment Weekly and gaming experts from G4, the cable TV games channel, have voted the "Zelda" series, from Japan's Nintendo Co. Ltd. to the top of a list of the best 100 video games ever.

The "Zelda" series is a chronicle of heroic adventures in fantasy lands; the latest game, "The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker," features a character named Link who sails the seas searching for his sister and using a magic staff that can summon windstorms.

The list, which appears in the new Entertainment Weekly and will be broken down in a series of nightly specials the week of May 5 on G4, encompasses all genres of games and all systems, from classic arcade machines to today's game consoles.

Second on the list was the 1993 PC game "Doom," from id Software, widely
hailed as a revolution in PC gaming both for its graphics and its
often-gory violence.

Rounding out the top five were the classic puzzle game "Tetris," the
criminal adventure games "Grand Theft Auto III" and "Grand Theft Auto: Vice
City" from Take-Two Interactive Software Inc. and "Madden NFL 2003" from
Electronic Arts Inc.

Nintendo and EA combined for 20 of the 100 entries on the list, which comes
just days before the annual Electronic Entertainment Expo, or E3, the video
game industry's annual trade show in Los Angeles.

                    Lady Miss Kier Sues for Misappropriated Groove

The flamboyant British singer Lady Miss Kier believes a video game has
stolen her image, right down to the pink ponytailed hair, short skirt and
knee-high boots and signature cry of "Ooh La La."

The artist, real name Kierin Kirby, filed suit in Los Angeles Superior
Court this week against the U.S. arm of video game publisher Sega Corp.,
alleging the 2000 game "Space Channel 5" used her likeness without her
permission.

Kirby, who found international fame in the early 1990s as lead singer of
the band Deee-Lite with the song "Groove Is in the Heart," claimed in the
suit that the "Ulala" character in the game too closely resembles her. A
spokeswoman for Sega was not immediately available for comment.

According to the lawsuit, representatives of Sega offered Kirby about
$16,000 to license her name, likeness and recordings for the game. She said
she declined to grant such a license and claimed Sega appropriated her
image anyway for the game's main character.

Kirby also claimed the name "Ulala" is deceptively similar to the phrase
"Ooh La La," which she uses in her recordings.

The suit asks for damages of at least $750,000. An updated version of the
game in dispute is set to be released in Japan this summer for Sony Corp.'s
PlayStation 2.

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                        A-ONE's Headline News
                    The Latest in Computer Technology News
                      Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

                      Apple Launches Online Music Service

Apple Computer Inc. on Monday unveiled its long-awaited online music service, promising to make the process of buying music on the Internet simple and affordable.

The company said it aimed to make its Internet-based iTunes Music Store service cheap enough to compete with free, file-swapping sites the record industry blames for its slump.

Apple said its iTunes Musci software was immediately available for its own Macintosh computers, while a Windows version would be available by the end of the year.

In addition to downloading songs for 99 cents each, users would be allowed to burn songs on an unlimited number of CDs for personal use and download them on up to three computers.

At the same time, Apple rolled out new versions of its popular iPod digital music players with expanded capacity.

As expected, Apple said that its online song service would be integrated closely with its iPod line, allowing Mac users to buy music over the Internet and transfer it readily to the handheld players.

"Consumers don't want to be treated like criminals and artists don't want their valuable work stolen," Apple Chief Executive Steve Jobs said in a statement.

Apple said its online music service would feature more than 200,000 songs from the top five music companies.

"We don't know any other company that has these assets under one roof," Jobs said, referring to Apple's iPod, iTunes software, and the deals it had negotiated with the five largest record labels.

More than two years ago, Apple took the wraps off an advertising campaign with the phrase, "Rip. Mix. Burn," which irritated many in the music industry, who thought the tagline amounted to an incitement to piracy.

Jobs acknowledged as much on Monday, noting dryly: "There was some confusion." However, Jobs said that "rip" simply means transferring music from a CD to a computer's hard drive.

"That's what it means to everyone under 30," Jobs said at a San Francisco event attended by hundreds to unveil the service. He added that in light of Apple's music service, the tagline should be updated to be "Acquire. Manage. Listen."

Record industry executives have expressed hope that Apple's commercial music offering can lure users away from the file-sharing Internet services that music companies have blamed for slumping CD sales.

Jobs concluded the event with a video featuring interviews with U2 lead singer Bono and musicians Wynton Marsalis and Alanis Morissette, all praising Apple's new service.

Jobs said that the pay-as-you-download Apple service, which allows users to hear free, 30-second clips of songs, was superior to other fee-based online music services.

"People are used to owning their music," not renting it, Jobs said. "We

think subscriptions are the wrong path."

Listen.com's Rhapsody digital music service, which costs $9.95 a month and allows users to burn songs to a CD directly for 99 cents, offers more than Apple's service, the company's chief executive said.

"What Apple offers is about one-third of the features, two-thirds of the music to just over 3 percent of the market," said Sean Ryan, CEO of Listen.com, adding that its average user listens to 200 or more songs a month, which would make Apple's approach prohibitively expensive.

Rhapsody is being acquired by RealNetworks Inc. Representatives of the two online music services backed by the major labels, Pressplay and MusicNet, could not be immediately reached for comment, although record executives have been supportive of Apple's efforts.

Entertainment companies battling to shut down such file-sharing sites suffered an unexpected setback on Friday when a federal judge in Los Angeles denied a request to shut the Grokster and Morpheus song-swap services, saying they cannot control what is traded over their networks.

Cupertino, California-based Apple has built its strategy of around the idea that its Macintosh computers, which represent about 3 percent of the personal computer market, could serve as the "digital hub" of a still-emerging digital lifestyle.

Apple already has a hit with its popular iPod digital music player. The device, the size of a deck of playing cards, holds thousands of songs in digital format. It is available in versions that work both on Apple's computer and on computers using Microsoft's Windows operating system.

The new iPods are available in 10-gigabyte, 15-gigabyte and 30-gigabyte models and cost $299, $399 and $499, respectively. They are thinner and lighter than previous models and have back-lit buttons.

Mosaic Browser Marks 10th Anniversary

Ten years ago this month, software developers at the University of Illinois released Mosaic, which used graphical images and simplicity to open the World Wide Web to the masses.

What had been a domain of scientists and computer geeks dominated by cumbersome language and technical complexity became simple enough for nearly anyone to use.

Mosaic was released in April 1993 by the school's National Center for Supercomputing Applications as free software. It became the foundation for today's Web browsers, such as Microsoft's Internet Explorer and Netscape Communications' Communicator. Mosaic's lead developer, Marc Andreessen, became one of Netscape's founders and took some of his UI colleagues with him.

"It was an accelerator for the whole Internet," said Larry Smarr, the former director of the computing center. "It sort of took the Internet to the next level of capability."

Before Mosaic, access to the Internet and the World Wide Web was limited

to text. The new software brought a way to integrate images and sound with words.

Andreessen and his colleague Eric Bina had a clear goal when they started - a browser that was easy to install, simple to use and would work with different computer operating systems.

"We knew it didn't have to be hard to run this thing," Bina said.

The first version of Mosaic worked only with UNIX systems. Windows and Macintosh versions followed later in 1993.

Once word about Mosaic's simplicity circulated, users couldn't get the software fast enough, turning it from a creation of computer geeks to the beginning of an information revolution.

The NCSA Web site recorded more than 1 million downloads within a year of Mosaic's release. New users eager to surf the Web downloaded 70,000 copies of the software monthly.

Bina, who helped write the program, says he doesn't often think about his role in Web history. But he noticed the difference Mosaic has made when he used his computer to make plans to attend his 20th high school reunion.

"I thought it was amusing that the entire machinery used to organize my 20-year high school reunion was the result of things I was working on at the time of my 10-year reunion," he said.

Windows 'Longhorn' Leaked To Public, Again

For a third time, the successor to Windows XP has appeared on the Internet, raising suspicions among some that Microsoft isn't all that interested in plugging the leaks.

Milestone 5 of Longhorn, an alpha build tagged as 4015, has appeared on numerous newsgroups and IRC threads. As in the past, Microsoft has acknowledged the leak and says it is seeking the source.

Testers who have posted screenshot and comments about Longhorn at various Web sites note that this build sports several incremental improvements, including a new startup logo; enhancements to the sidebar, a desktop element that will display search tools and access to applications; and a refined search interface that lets users dig through local files, contacts, and the Internet.

Longhorn is not expected to release until next year, and possibly not until 2005.

Supreme Court Declines Internet Case

The Supreme Court refused Monday to consider an Internet-era case that asked which courts should handle lawsuits against people for information they put on the World Wide Web.

The question keeps coming up as more operators of Internet sites are taken to court for things like defamation or invasion of privacy.

The justices rejected an appeal from Healthgrades.com, which offers ratings of health care providers on the Internet. A home health care agency, Northwest Healthcare Alliance, contends it deserved a better grade. The agency sued for defamation in Washington state.

The attorney for Healthgrades.com said that the company, which operates out of Colorado, should not be forced to go to trial in Washington. Kris Kostolansky said that an appeals court ruling allowing the suit "subjects those who communicate opinions over the Internet to the unconstitutional burden of being subject to suit in any forum, until such time as this court corrects the injustice."

The Supreme Court has considered some Internet cases. But so far, justices have not been willing to consider a cyberspace legal boundary issue: Where can lawsuits involving the Web be filed?

The Internet jurisdiction subject has come up in Australia, where that country's highest court ruled last year that a businessman could sue for defamation over an article published in the United States and posted on the Internet.

In the Washington state case, the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals said that Healthgrades.com had opened itself up for a lawsuit in Washington by grading a Washington state provider and obtaining information for the rating from Washington state records.

Healthgrades.com offers ratings of doctors, hospitals, nursing homes and home health care agencies.

The case is Healthgrades.com, Inc. v. Northwest Health Care Alliance In., 02-1250.

What Is Spam? Summit Experts Can't Decide

Spam must be stopped, lawmakers and Internet experts said Wednesday, but few agreed on how to curb the junk e-mail they say threatens to overwhelm the Net's most popular application.

At the opening of the Federal Trade Commission's two-day "spam summit," participants could not even agree on what online marketing qualifies as spam.

Marketers said messages with misleading subject lines like "Re: your account" were to blame, squeezing out more reputable operators who send messages only to consumers who want to hear from them.

Internet providers and consumer advocates said it is not content but the sheer number of messages that poses the biggest threat. "The deception does not mitigate the problem of bulk," said Laura Atkins, president of SpamCon, an anti-spam foundation.

Unsolicited pitches have been a feature of the Internet since 1978, when a Digital Equipment salesman sent a message touting a new computer to every West Coast user of the Arpanet, as it was then known.

But spam has become a major problem as the number of unwanted commercial messages skyrocketed in the past two years. Filtering company Postini said 75% of the e-mail it handles is spam, up from 5% in 1999. AOL said it blocks more than 2 billion spam messages a day, about 67 for each e-mail account.

"Spam is threatening to destroy the benefits of e-mail," FTC Chairman Timothy Muris said.

The forum, which brought together marketers, Internet providers, anti-spam advocates and federal policymakers, gave lawmakers a chance to tout their anti-spam proposals. Rep. Zoe Lofgren, D-Calif., said her bill would post a reward for Internet users who help track down spammers. Sen. Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., proposed setting up a "do not spam" list of people who don't want to get commercial pitches.

Sens. Conrad Burns, R-Mont., and Ron Wyden, D-Ore., said their bill, which outlaws false return addresses, would help track down spammers because it would override the 27 current state spam laws. Without a national law, "Spammers will play one state off another," Wyden said.

But the Burns-Wyden bill, which has won the most industry and Capitol Hill support, was criticized by Internet providers who said it should include criminal penalties and not override stronger state laws.

E-mail marketer Bill Waggoner said that although he sends no mail to customers who do not want it, spam is unavoidable. "If you get your e-mail added to the Internet, somebody's going to contact you," he says. "It's a public deal all over the world."

Spam Shootout Starts

A showdown featuring e-marketers and anti-spammers lent a Wild West air here to a Federal Trade Commission conference on spam, the growing pest consumers love to hate.

The FTC says it aims to corral spam, those unwanted e-mails from the sketchy outposts of the Internet frontier. But apparently spam is in the eye of the beholder.

Spam profiteers and prey disagree on how to define the unsolicited electronic messages. Some advertisers see beauty in e-mail marketing, but most conference-goers adamantly agree the practice is a "scourge" or "toxic sea." Attendees include representatives of marketing companies, the federal government, ISPs, and consumer groups.

"We don't deceptively lure people to our Web sites," said William Waggoner, founder of Las Vegas e-marketing firm AAW Marketing.

Waggoner, who says he has received death threats from unhappy e-mail recipients and anti-spammers, blames the spam epidemic on unethical operators.

He says AAW Marketing helps thousands of companies send 15 million e-mail messages daily. These pitches, which commonly feature penis enhancement and sexual arousal remedies, are neither pornographic nor spam, he said.

Waggoner said his eight-person shop sends e-mails only to people who responded to solicitations on Web forms. He said he never lures customers with phony subject lines.

"What you see in the subject line is what you get in the e-mail itself," he said.

Spam bills now pending before Congress range from a national opt-out list to placing bounties on deceptive spammers.

Obscene e-mails greeting the teenage daughter of Senator Charles Schumer (D-New York) motivated the senator to fight spam by introducing new legislation. But Waggoner says the real dirty spammers are teenagers themselves.

"It's 14-year-old kids," Waggoner said of spam purveyors. "It makes me very angry to be attacked personally, but I'm a guy you can find. There's a lot of idiots in this business."

One former spammer now works as a consultant to Waggoner's business. John Penn, owner of Upper Echelon Enterprises, said he quit spamming in Ohio when the state banned it.

Penn said a national spam law might even boost his business but there should be legal consequences for people who "cry spam" and ruin the reputation of legitimate companies. If they sign up for Internet sweepstakes, he said, then they have no right to complain when they receive e-mail solicitations.

Penn said the notion that unsubscribing leads to more spam is "urban legend." Recipients of unwanted e-mail solicitations can drop off the list, he says.

But Waggoner, asked how to unsubscribe from his e-marketing lists, did not directly answer. And while he denied his company harvests random e-mail addresses from the Internet, he suggested Web surfers become more street-smart. "If you post your e-mail addresses on the Internet, you're going to open yourself up to being e-mailed," Waggoner said.

It's unrealistic to expect the average Web surfer to be so savvy, said Gilson Terriberry, owner of Direct Contact Marketing Group. His one-person firm finds e-mail lists for businesses ranging from trade associations to wine newsletters.

Customer response rates to his clients' e-mail ads have drastically dropped in the last two years because "spam has poisoned the well," he said.

Established marketers who moved their direct mail operations online in the past decade generally define spam as unwanted e-mail sent from anonymous sources. But some people consider any unknown e-mail, including those they signed up for, as spam.

Each day the FTC receives 130,000 spam messages, which it stores in a "refrigerator." Start-up business offers, pornography, and financial services comprise 55 percent of spam received by the FTC, representatives said.

The Justice Department estimates most spam is sent by a mere 200 sources.

It took Washington State Attorney General Christine Gregoire 14 subpoenas to unravel the identity of a single spammer, she said.

Principled e-marketers could benefit from regulations, because they would differentiate the legit businesses "from the unwashed masses" of spammers, said Brian Arbogast, a Microsoft vice president of mobile services.

"Strong criminal penalties for the really slimy folks" are a good idea, agreed Joe Barrett, a senior vice president of systems operations at America Online.

But Waggoner said giants like AOL and Microsoft are just as guilty of perpetuating spam, and he called AOL's campaign to block two billion spam messages a day "a complete fraud."

Top E-Mail Providers Unite Against Spam

Three companies representing the world's largest block of e-mail users joined hands on Monday to fight spam as they increasingly weigh the cost of preventing unsolicited e-mail from clogging inboxes, networks and computer memory space.

America Online Inc., Microsoft Corp. Yahoo! Inc. said they would work together to devise ways to block unidentified messages, stop spammers from creating fraudulent e-mail accounts and work more closely with law enforcement to reign in the practice.

Users fed up with spam, or e-mail touting everything from get-rick-quick schemes to porn and sex toys, are calling on their e-mail service providers to stop the flood of unwelcome advertisements from spammers, or spam senders.

"Spammers are public enemy No. 1," said Nicholas Graham, spokesman at America Online Inc., the Internet unit of AOL Time Warner.

According to a report by Forrester Research, North American online users said more than one-third of their e-mail is junk mail, with the average consumer getting bombarded with 110 unwanted e-mails every week.

America Online has 35 million subscribers, Microsoft's MSN Internet service has over 9 million subscribers, plus millions more with accounts on their Hotmail free e-mail service. Yahoo does not disclose its e-mail user data.

Taking on spammers is nothing new for these companies, which already employ a variety of technologies to filter out unsolicited messages and thwart their efforts to register for free e-mail accounts that they use as a launchpad for spam.

"It's not just about using technology, but also building a coalition for more collaboration and more cooperation," said Brian Arbogast, corporate vice president at Microsoft for delivering authentication and mobile service at MSN.

For example, Microsoft, America Online and Yahoo would share the techniques they use to identify e-mail whose author and origins have been concealed.

America Online, the world's largest Internet service provider, filed five

separate lawsuits against more than a dozen individuals and companies two
weeks ago for sending about 1 billion unsolicited messages, hawking
everything from pornography and steroids to college degrees and mortgages.

Microsoft and EarthLink Inc., a smaller Internet access provider, have also
pursued legal action.

Other companies, such as anti-virus vendor Trend Micro Inc. and private
start-up Qurb Inc., are offering software that users can buy and install to
block spam.

Despite all these efforts, the companies admit that it may be nearly
impossible to completely eradicate unsolicited e-mail, as spammers work
furiously to devise new ways of circumventing the virtual roadblocks thrown
in their way.

"Spam is like the cold virus of the Internet," said America Online's
Graham, "Its going to exist in some form or another, like taxes or bad
weather."

Washington Conference to Tackle 'Spam' Deluge

Death comes once a lifetime, taxes come once a year. Spam, as any Internet
user will tell you, arrives all day, every day.

Unwanted junk e-mail has grown to the point where it now accounts for
nearly half of all e-mail traffic, according to some estimates, clogging
the pipes and inboxes of the Internet's original "killer app" with offers
for herbal Viagra, lonely housewives and questionable debt-reduction
schemes.

The problem has even reached the marble halls of Washington, where the
Federal Trade Commission has planned a three-day conference starting on
Wednesday to discuss the issue.

Government officials, online marketers, Internet providers and anti-spam
activists are scheduled to speak on topics such as "Economics of Spam" and
"E-mail Address Gathering."

Participants say they don't expect any concrete proposals to come out of
the conference but hope merely to gather information and sit down at the
table with others affected by the issue.

"Spam is one of the things that people talk about a lot, but people know
few hard facts about," said Brian Huseman, an FTC attorney who specializes
in spam.

The conference has already inspired a flurry of activity. America Online.,
Microsoft Corp. and Yahoo Inc. have announced that they will work together
to track down spammers, while smaller companies have taken the opportunity
to announce upgrades to their anti-spam services.

Two lawmakers plan to introduce anti-spam bills into Congress this week,
joining one existing proposal that has already gained considerable
support.

Rep. Zoe Lofgren, a California Democrat, introduced a bill Monday that

would provide a bounty to Internet users who tracked down renegade spammers, while New York Democratic Sen. Charles Schumer wants to set up a "do not spam" list of e-mail addresses that do not wish to receive unsolicited pitches.

The existing proposal, sponsored by Montana Republican Sen. Conrad Burns and Oregon Democratic Sen. Ron Wyden, would require online marketers to provide legitimate return addresses and honor opt-out requests.

While more than half of U.S. states have enacted some sort of anti-spam measure, spam laws have stumbled previously in Congress due to the opposition of direct marketers who feared they would lose a valuable promotional tool. But with direct marketers now worrying that their efforts are getting lost amid the clutter, observers say Congress is now more likely to act.

"We definitely believe that there should be regulations and legislation," said Al DeGuido, CEO of marketing firm Bigfoot Interactive Inc., which helps newspapers and automakers send e-mail messages to customers who have signed up for them.

The amount of spam has skyrocketed in the past year and a half, rising from 8 percent of all e-mail traffic in September 2001 to 45 percent last month, according to anti-spam firm Brightmail Inc. Jupiter Research estimates that U.S. Internet users received an average of 2,200 spam messages last year.

The Customs Service estimates that Nigerian scam artists claiming to need help transferring money fleeced U.S. Internet users for at least $100 million last year.

"It's just human nature. You see something like this and you think you'll get something for nothing," said Customs Service spokesman Dan Dluzneski.

The FTC encourages e-mail users to forward spam to uce@ftc.gov, where it can be examined for possible fraudulent business practices. The "refrigerator," as the computer is known, currently receives 130,000 e-mails per day, Huseman said.

The FTC has managed to shut down 48 spammers, he said.

Large ISPs such as EarthLink Inc. and America Online have filed suits of their own, using existing trespass, nuisance and computer-crime laws to shut down spammers.

EarthLink has sued over 100 spammers, winning judgments of up to $25 million, said Dave Baker, vice president for law and public policy, and also uses a variety of filtering technologies and several full-time staffers to weed out unwanted messages.

"No one thing will solve the problem," said Baker, who estimates that spam costs his company millions each year.

ISPs and other spam opponents use a variety of techniques to stop spam: "blacklists" of computers known to send spam; "whitelists" of e-mail addresses that are not spam; filters that scan text for key words and patterns used by spammers; and "honeypots," dummy e-mail addresses set up to collect and identify spam.

A group of Florida marketers sued several blacklist operators two weeks ago, alleging that they were unfairly smeared. Boca Raton attorney Mark

Felstein said he has received a deluge of harassing calls, faxes and e-mails since filing the suit.

"This is very much against the American way, which is free commerce," said Felstein, who noted that his clients do not send e-mail without prior permission.

Senator Schumer To Introduce Anti-Spam Bill

Sen. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) is fed up with spam. And he may be able to do something about it.

The senior legislator plans to introduce a new anti-spam law that would create "no spam" directories like the already-in-place "no call" lists for telemarketers, impose stiff civil and criminal penalties on convicted spammers, and ban the practice of automatically harvesting e-mail addresses, a common tool used by spammers to build their mailing lists.

"Spam is not just a little nuisance, it's an epidemic," said Schumer in a statement.

Schumer's legislation, which is expected to be introduced into the Senate by next week, would also require all commercial mass e-mails and advertisements to place the letters "ADV" in the subject line to indicate the message contains commercial content. Users would be able to easily filter out such messages with their client's rules, or using anti-spam software.

Schumer's legislation is the second "ban spam" proposal this month. Earlier in April, Sens. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) and Conrad Burns (R-Mont.) reintroduced a bill that would require all messages use a valid return address so spammers could be identified and users could request that their names be removed from marketing lists.

Virginia Has Nation's Toughest Anti-Spam Law

Internet mavens who clog computers with massive volumes of unsolicited e-mail pitches now risk landing in prison and losing their riches under a tough Virginia law signed Tuesday.

The penalties can apply even if the sender and recipients live elsewhere because much of the global Internet traffic passes through northern Virginia, home to major online companies such as America Online and MCI and a conduit to major federal communications hubs in neighboring Washington and its suburbs.

Although about half the states have anti-spam laws, no other allows authorities to seize the assets earned from spamming while imposing up to five years in felony prison time, said Gov. Mark R. Warner and Randall Boe, AOL's chief staff attorney.

"We want to be able to put out not only a potential criminal violation with the felony but also to seize the proceeds from this illegal activity - their cars, boats, airplanes, homes," Warner said.

Warner, who became a multimillionaire as a high-technology investor before he was elected governor, said technical filters and civil penalties have proven inadequate.

Spamming has grown into a costly problem and the No. 1 complaint of AOL's nearly 35 million users, Boe said. AOL blocks billions of pieces of spam each week, but billions more get through, he said.

As AOL and major competitors such as Microsoft, AT&T, MCI and Yahoo! struggle to improve filtering technology, they hope hard-nosed laws such as Virginia's will deter unsolicited junk e-mail.

The new law is directed at commercial bulk e-mail, with certain provisions that kick in when someone sends at least 10,000 copies of a message in a single day or makes at least $1,000 from one such transmission.

"That's different than an occasional e-mail gone awry," Warner said.

The Virginia law also prohibits tools that automate spam and the forging of e-mail headers, which contain identification information on the sender and its service provider. Spammers often forge the headers to hide their identity and cover their tracks.

The same provisions could affect noncommercial unsolicited e-mail from charities, churches or political candidates if they exceed the volume limit or disguise the sender's identity, said Tim Murtaugh, press secretary for Attorney General Jerry W. Kilgore.

John R. Levine, a board member of the Coalition Against Unsolicited Commercial E-Mail, applauded tougher penalties for spammers, but questioned how effective Virginia law's will be.

"It depends on prosecutors to put them in line along with rapists, murderers and wife-beaters, so I don't think it will be very effective without additional funding," Levine said.

In a study released Tuesday in advance of a three-day forum on how government and businesses should deal with spam, the FTC said a third of spam e-mails contained false information in the "from" line to obscure a sender's true identity.

Nearly half of that misleading information involved attempts to claim a personal relationship with the person receiving the e-mail.

Spammers also use misleading subject lines to get their pitches read, the FTC said. Many messages claim to be personal or business correspondence by using subject lines like "your order's status."

In Congress, Rep. Zoe Lofgren, D-Calif., planned to introduce legislation this week offering rewards for individuals who help track down spammers.

Her bill would require marketers to label spam as "ADV:" and prohibit false or misleading message headers.

State laws with similar provisions have been hard to enforce because they require tremendous resources to track down elusive spammers.

Lofgren's bill would give individuals incentive to do the legwork by offering a bounty to the first person to report the spam and provide

information helpful to investigators. The bounty would amount to 20 percent of any civil fines collected by the Federal Trade Commission.

Meanwhile, AOL, Yahoo and Microsoft announced a joint initiative this week to combat spam through such techniques as identifying and restricting messages with deceptive headers.

Danish Company Convicted, Fined for Spam

A small software company in Denmark was convicted and fined Thursday for sending unsolicited commercial e-mail, known as spam.

In the first such case in this Scandinavian country, the Maritime and Commercial Court in Copenhagen fined Fonn Danmark $2,200 under the country's ban on unsolicited advertising e-mail and faxes. The law was enacted in July 2000.

Investigators said the company had sent 156 advertising messages.

The ruling can be appealed. No one answered the phone at Fonn Danmark's office or replied to e-mails requesting comment.

"We would have like to see a bigger fine, but considering that we are talking about a very small company and the fact that it has only been found guilty of sending 156 advertisements, the fine isn't that bad," said Denmark's consumer ombudsman, Hagen Joergensen.

Denmark's government-run Consumer Agency sued the company after it received 50 complaints.

FTC Says Two-Thirds of E-Mail Spam Fraudulent

Those get-rich-quick schemes and offers for herbal Viagra crowding your e-mail inbox are not just an annoyance - they're likely illegal as well, the U.S. Federal Trade Commission said on Tuesday.

Two out of three "spam" e-mail messages contain false information of some sort, according to an analysis of unsolicited e-mail pitches collected by the FTC.

Of a random sample of 1,000 spam messages, 44 percent used a false return address to hide the sender's identity, or a misleading subject line such as "re: lunch tomorrow" to trick the recipient into opening it, the FTC found.

Once opened, nearly as many of those messages contained come-ons that were likely to be false, the FTC said, basing its judgment on its experience prosecuting fraudulent business practices. A full 96 percent of spam touting business or investment opportunities such as work-at-home offers was deemed to be fraudulent.

Altogether, 66 percent of the spam surveyed likely violated federal law through some sort of deceptive business practice, said Eileen Harrington, an associate director at the FTC.

"Spam is a big fraud problem and one that needs an aggressive law-enforcement response," said Harrington.

The volume of unsolicited, unwanted commercial e-mail has skyrocketed over the past two years, according to most estimates, and commercial Internet providers say they now spend millions of dollars each year fighting the problem.

The FTC, which has used deceptive-business laws to shut down 48 spammers since 1997, hopes to determine whether additional laws are needed to fight the problem after it hosts a three-day conference on the issue starting on Wednesday, Harrington said.

Virginia became the 27th state to enact an anti-spam law on Tuesday when Governor Mark Warner signed a bill that prohibits bulk e-mailers from hiding their return addresses or other routing information. Those caught violating the law would face a prison term of one to five years as well as fines.

While many other state laws require commercial e-mail to carry an "ADV:" tag in the subject line, only 2 percent of the spam surveyed contained such a tag, the FTC report found.

Congress has not yet passed a national anti-spam law, but observers say the odds are better now that direct marketers have dropped their opposition.

One measure would require online marketers to provide legitimate return addresses and honor consumer requests to opt out. Sponsored by Montana Republican Sen. Conrad Burns and Oregon Democratic Sen. Ron Wyden, it has drawn considerable support from the high-tech industry.

Another proposal introduced yesterday by Rep. Zoe Lofgren, a California Democrat, would provide a reward to Internet users who tracked down renegade spammers, while New York Democratic Sen. Charles Schumer on Tuesday proposed setting up a "do not spam" list, similar to the "do not call" registry set up by the FTC to keep telemarketers at bay.

But several consumer advocates said these proposals were inadequate as they did not allow individuals to sue spammers for damages.

"Spamming is a numbers game, and the only way to beat the spammers is to have large numbers of litigants against them," said Jason Catlett, president of Junkbusters Corp. in a conference call with reporters.

The FTC culled the spam in its report from three sources: a database of spam forwarded by consumers; "honeypot" e-mail accounts designed to attract spam for analysis; and a sampling of spams that turned up in FTC staffers' inboxes.

Spam Leads To High Costs For ISPs

Like crime, spam does pay, and ISPs are footing the bill. Although many spammers and the companies they represent view bulk unsolicited e-mail as an acceptable, low-cost means of doing business, those on the receiving end view it as an invasion of privacy and an insidious drain on resources.

Take Interwrx, a regional ISP in Mesa, Ariz. The company spent more than

$1 million last year fighting spam and says a quarter of the 250,000 e-mails it processes every day are spam. Another regional ISP, Parsippany, N.J.-based Net Access, says 65 percent to 75 percent of its daily 600,000 to 800,000 e-mails are spam.

Spam costs these ISPs in many forms,the need for an antispam staff; additional storage, bandwidth and software requirements; the need for resources to develop homegrown solutions and additional man-hours to handle reconfigurations; and lawsuits brought both against spammers and against the ISPs.

On top of this, ISPs walk a fine line when trying to institute antispam policies. Not all users have the same definition of spam, so ISPs can lose customers if they mistakenly block e-mails that are legitimate or are perceived to be legitimate.

"Spammers don't realize and probably don't care about the cost burden this puts on us," said Scott Sampson, COO of Interwrx. "We have to spend several thousand dollars on equipment and then add in the man-hours we spend fighting this, and it only costs spammers pennies to send out thousands of e-mails."

As of last month, 45 percent of all e-mails were identified as spam, according to antispam software vendor Brightmail, San Francisco. What's more, research firm Gartner estimates that, on average, an ISP with 1 million users spends $7 million a year fighting spam.

And it's getting worse. In the past 18 months alone, ISP EarthLink said it has seen a 500 percent increase in spam e-mails. Yahoo, meanwhile, said it receives about five times more spam than it did a year ago.

So why are spam figures reaching an all-time high, and how can ISPs, which many consider to be the front line of defense in this battle, fight these increasingly tricky hawkers?

The economy is playing a major role in the increase in spam, ISPs say. Spamming is cheap, fast and profitable. A spammer that sends out millions of e-mails may only need to receive responses from less than 1 percent to make a profit.

Developing solutions to fight spam is an ongoing process for ISPs, with spammers seeming to find a way around an ISP's blocking and tackling measures almost as soon as they're deployed. What it will take is a combination of technology, legislation and litigation to confront the problem, ISPs say.

On the technology front, about two new antispam solutions are introduced a month, but many of them are half-baked, said Martin Nelson, an analyst at Ferris Research. This forces many ISPs to either develop their own solutions or employ the services of an antispam vendor. Yahoo, for example, has a homegrown solution called SpamGuard. Out of the 10 largest ISPs, six, including EarthLink and BellSouth, use antispam vendor Brightmail, according to Brightmail President and CEO Enrique Salem.

While generally found to be effective, Brightmail is also considered to be an expensive solution to the problem of spam, ISPs say. However, this month Brightmail introduced a version of its software priced for the small- and midsize-business markets, Salem said. The vendor is also developing a program to recruit solution providers to sell its offerings, he said.

Some of the new tactics used by spammers include hiding text in graphics so it can't be identified as spam, or sending URLs as the body of a message, Salem said.

"The tricks spammers use change everyday, and with the URL problem, for example, ISPs can't spend, say, eight to 10 seconds per e-mail to figure out what's on the other end of that URL," Salem said.

Another trick of the spamming trade is to hijack other companies' servers.

"There are always open mail servers not protected by any security that spammers can find," said Blake Elman, president and CEO of Net Access. "It's essentially a theft of service, but the problem is that someone didn't tighten security, so any third party can identify a server as an open server and use it to send out 100,000 e-mails from their PC to another company's e-mail server."

The problem is, independent organizations such as SPEWS (Spam Prevention Early Warning System) that track spam activity don't differentiate between a spammer's server and one it may have hijacked, ISPs say. This puts the ISPs in a guilt-by-association situation in which not only the spammer, but all associated routes that the spammer takes, are labeled as spam-friendly. Many ISPs land on such blacklists and find it difficult to remove themselves.

And some ISPs,those that are only interested in making a buck,are indeed spam-friendly, ISP executives admit. Still, the majority of ISPs view spam as a drain on business and say they are becoming involved in a number of projects aimed at putting an end to it.

Legislation that allows ISPs to identify and prosecute spammers is critical, ISP executives say. ISPs are often shackled when spammers hide behind privacy and freedom of speech laws and are hoping that legislation will correct the problem.

Interwrx, for example, is fighting one spammer in court, not to shut the spammer down, but because the spammer claims that the ISP unjustly shut it off. And earlier this month, American Online filed a suit in Virginia against five spammers and is seeking more than $10 million in damages.

On the legislative front, California Senator Debra Bowen is attempting to pass a state bill that would charge spammers $500 per unsolicited e-mail. Not only is Bowen hoping to pass her spam penalty bill, but she thinks major credit card companies are prime targets to go after to prevent spam as well.

"Very rarely do you see spammers asking for a check," said Bowen. "The majority of the transactions are done though credit card companies like MasterCard or Visa, so I think we need to put pressure on these companies to not give merchant accounts to known spammers."

ISPs, however, argue that state bills won't be effective. What is needed is a national standard for prosecuting spammers. Even better, they say, would be international standards, since a significant amount of spam originates outside of the United States.

At the Federal level, The Federal Trade Commission is developing a project to involve several countries in the antispam effort. This month, the FTC is holding a spam forum to discuss the international perception of spam and how to address it, said Brian Huseman, staff attorney for the FTC. Those

invited come from Korea, Australia, Japan, Canada and other nations. The FTC is hoping the end result of the project will be an international standard for dealing with and prosecuting spammers.

"Some of the major issues we are going to deal with are blacklists, which are pretty controversial because the groups that blacklist, such as SPEWS, don't have a way of contacting them and getting removed from the list, and many of these organizations take aggressive tactics that result in false spam positives," said Huseman.

Believe it or not, direct marketers are also joining the fight against spam, since such organizations fear being categorized as spammers. Companies often turn to advertising agencies and order packages that combine magazine, radio, phone and e-mail advertising. These agencies in turn often contract out work such as telemarketing and e-mail to third parties. The problem with this is that these third parties may use aggressive spamming tactics that are traced back to the original company selling the product.

Many ISPs propose to address this problem by putting pressure on the companies that buy e-mail advertising to keep their advertising agencies and resellers in line with penalties for spamming.

"We approached a large credit card company because it appeared that spam was coming from them," said Brightmail's Salem. "They said the problem was they bought a package from an ad agency. This is a reputable company, but they are dealing with spammers three times removed from their campaign."

Experts Say Spam Volume Threatening E-Mail's Future

Spam must be stopped, lawmakers and Internet experts said on Wednesday, but few agreed how to curb the unwanted junk e-mail they say threatens to overwhelm the Internet's most popular application.

On the first day of the Federal Trade Commission's "spam summit," participants could not even agree on what type of online marketing was unacceptable enough to earn the pejorative tag.

Marketers said that deceptive messages with misleading subject lines like "Re: your account" were to blame, squeezing out more reputable operators who only send messages to consumers who want to hear from them. Internet providers and consumer advocates said it was the sheer number of messages, not their content, that posed the biggest threat.

"The deception does not mitigate the problem of bulk," said Laura Atkins, president of the SpamCon foundation, an anti-spam group.

Unsolicited commercial pitches have been a feature of the Internet landscape since 1978, when a Digital Equipment Corp. salesman sent a message touting a new computer to every West Coast user of the Arpanet, as it was then known.

But spam has become a major problem as the number of unwanted commercial messages has skyrocketed in the last two years. Filtering company Postini Inc. said 75 percent of the mail it handles is now spam, up from 5 percent in 1999. Internet provider America Online said it now blocks over 2 billion spam messages each day, roughly 67 for each e-mail account.

"Spam is threatening to destroy the benefits of e-mail," FTC Chairman
Timothy Muris said in opening remarks.

The forum, which brought together marketers, Internet providers, anti-spam
advocates and Washington policymakers, gave lawmakers a chance to tout
their various anti-spam proposals. California Rep. Zoe Lofgren said her
bill would allow Internet users to collect a reward if they helped track
down spammers, while New York Sen. Charles Schumer proposed setting up a
"do not spam" list of people who did not want to receive commercial
pitches.

Sens. Conrad Burns and Ron Wyden said their bill, which outlaws the use of
false return addresses, would help track down spammers because it would
override the 27 state spam laws already in place.

Without a single national law, "spammers will play one state off another,"
said Wyden, an Oregon Democrat.

But the Burns-Wyden bill, which so far has won the most support from
industry and on Capitol Hill, came in for criticism from providers who
said it should include criminal penalties and not override stronger state
laws.

All of the proposed bills would prove toothless because they would not
allow consumers to sue directly, said Washington State Attorney General
Christine Gregoire.

E-mail marketer Bill Waggoner, sporting sunglasses and a ponytail, said
that although he did not send messages to customers who did not want them,
spam was unavoidable in such an open, global system.

"If you get your e-mail added to the Internet, somebody's going to contact
you," Waggoner said. "It's a public deal all over the world."

Go Hunting for Spammers

A U.S. Congresswoman plans to introduce an antispam bill that would pay a
bounty to some who report spammers, and Stanford University law professor
and cyberlaw author Lawrence Lessig said he's so sure the bill will cut the
amount of spam sent that he'll quit his job if it doesn't.

Representative Zoe Lofgren, (D-California), announced her plans to
introduce the Restrict and Eliminate Delivery of Unsolicited Commercial
E-mail (REDUCE) Spam Act during an event for Stanford law students in
Stanford, California, Monday.

The bill, similar in some ways to a bill introduced by two U.S. senators
earlier this month, introduces as a new wrinkle a bounty for the first
person to report a spam offender, with a reward of 20 percent of the civil
fine levied by the U.S. Federal Trade Commission against the spammer.

The bounty for spammers is an idea that Lessig has been advancing for
several months, and in January he publicly bet his job on the effectiveness
of a bill that would offer a bounty. Lofgren's bill is "an example of be
careful what you wish for," Lessig said Monday. The bet would get Lessig's
detractors to "rally for this proposal," he added.

With a civil fine of up to $10 per offending piece of e-mail, the potential bounty for those who report spam violations could be in the thousands of dollars, a spokesperson for Lofgren said. Fines could be in the "magnitude of the thousands," the spokesperson said.

The bill could be effective "because prosecutors have better things to do than tracking down spammers," Lessig said. "It will soon be not worth it to send out 10,000 human growth hormone e-mails a day."

Lofgren said most other antispam legislation that's been debated in Congress imposes criminal penalties, but she agreed with Lessig that "spamsters" aren't likely to make it on the agendas of most prosecuting attorneys. "The U.S. attorneys have their hands full bringing actions against terrorists, against thieves," she said.

Lofgren's bill, to be introduced Tuesday, includes a number of provisions that, if broken by a sender of unsolicited commercial e-mail, would trigger civil fines. The bill requires spammers to:

   * Label bulk commercial spam as "ADV:" and bulk adult-themed spam as
     "ADV:ADLT."
   * Provide valid return e-mail addresses where a person can write to opt
     out of further e-mails.
   * Not send any further e-mail after a person opts out.
   * Not send e-mail with false or misleading routing information or
     deceptive subject headings.

The bill also gives Internet service providers the right to bring civil actions against marketers who violate those requirements and disrupt their networks, and it allows for criminal fines and up to a year in prison for fraudulent spam.

Also Monday, America Online, Microsoft, and Yahoo announced an antispam initiative. Their combined effort will include the identification of suspicious e-mail headers, better feedback options for consumers across the different e-mail service providers, and closer cooperation with law enforcement authorities.

"People are tired of hearing 'you've got junk mail' when they open their e-mail in-boxes," Lofgren said. "Companies and ISPs are spending millions of dollars a year in trying to manage this problem."

                          Top Anti-Spam Tools

Syntegra's innovative and sophisticated spam-busting product won the solution provider top honors in the CRN test center's antispam contest.

The tide of spam continues to rise. Some estimates put the number of unsolicited and unwanted e-mail messages that will flood into U.S. corporations this year as high as 76 billion, with an annual cost to businesses of $10 billion. This barrage of junk e-mail can affect anyone who has an electronic inbox, from home Internet users who go online via an ISP to business users who access the Internet from a corporate network.

Earlier this month, America Online filed five lawsuits against spammers, seeking a total of $10 million in damages, after receiving nearly 8 million

individual complaints from subscribers. Spam accounts for more than 40 percent of the incoming e-mail at a typical U.S. corporation, according to San Francisco-based antispam vendor Brightmail.

To highlight the channel's role in the fight against spam, and to provide an ongoing forum for sharing ideas across the solution provider community, the CRN Test Center conducted an antispam contest. In January, we began soliciting entries on crn.com, asking solution providers to submit examples of deployed, customized antispam solutions. We received 36 submissions, which were then judged by CRN Test Center engineers on their level of innovation, completeness, scalability and original effort.

Our results revealed that the battle to control our inboxes is a fast-moving target. In Spy vs. Spy style, for every antispam solution created to date, spammers have launched a counterattack that continues to put strains on network bandwidth, storage, processor time and man-hours.

And when it comes to precanned antispam products, no single solution is all things to all customers. Most e-mail servers include basic antispam filtering, and numerous ISVs have entered the fray with add-on filtering products. But solution providers report that these precanned solutions only go so far. They're either targeted at businesses of a specific size or address only a small number of the issues companies face as they drown in spam.

Yet we certainly found what we were looking for. Solution providers are filling in the gaps among the current crop of spam-fighting products with a broad variety of homespun antispam solutions.

While the solutions we evaluated were allowed to contain off-the-shelf core products and services, they were required to show significant original effort from solution providers to extend the products' capabilities and/or integrate additional products. No restrictions were placed on the form the solution could take or where it resided on the network, so custom appliances, firewall servers and services were all acceptable.

After a 10-week evaluation process, the CRN Test Center determined that solution provider Syntegra had the most innovative, scalable and thorough antispam solution of all of the contest respondents. Syntegra's extensive experience obviously worked in its favor,the Arden Hills, Minn.-based company has been managing enterprise messaging environments for 10 years and selling antispam solutions for five.

One of the chief features of Syntegra's winning Detect Undesirable E-mail (DUE) solution was its level of sophistication. Heuristics layered on top of standard filtering techniques created a robust solution that stood out from the other submissions.

Syntegra's antispam solution is also scalable and applicable to a wide variety of environments. It is deployed between the enterprise e-mail server and the Internet. The solution works with any mail server that supports SMTP, making it a good fit for a large number of potential customers. It also allows the solution to scale to meet customers' needs and opens the door to return engagements. The solution is currently in use at more than 100 enterprises, including Visa and United Health Group.

ATT personal, or single-client, products had too high an administrative overhead; and open-source products were either too complicated or bandwidth-intensive.

Relying on Perl scripts to detect and quarantine spam mail, CFCS' solution integrates Fetchmail, Procmail and Sendmail. The solution builds separate blacklists for subject lines, senders' addresses and message bodies from received mail that recipients identify as unsolicited. Users forward the headers of junk mail to an administrator, who adds them to the block list. When a message is suspected of being junk mail, it's quarantined to a single account,preventing the loss of false positives,and the sender is notified.

Feds Crackdown on Internet Auction Fraud

When Rick Skinner auctioned his laptop computer on the Internet, he expected to pocket hundreds of dollars. Instead, he was left without a laptop or the money for it, but he got a lesson in Internet fraud.

Con artists located Skinner through eBay and persuaded him to sell the computer through their service, which they said would ensure he got his money. But the service was a scheme that tricked Skinner into shipping his $1,300 computer right to the scammers.

"I never heard from the buyer, the escrow company, nobody since then," said Skinner, 37, a network engineer from Norfolk, Va.

The scheme that snatched Skinner's laptop was among those targeted by federal and state regulators Wednesday in the largest government crackdown against Internet auction fraud. Such crime was the No. 1 Internet-related complaint recorded by the Federal Trade Commission last year.

The FTC and 33 state and local law enforcement agencies have moved against auction con artists with 57 actions ranging from prosecutions to warning letters, said Howard Beales, chief of the FTC's Bureau of Consumer Protection.

"Real-world law enforcement will not let you get away with virtual fraud," Beales said.

Most of the cases included in "Operation Bidder Beware" involve scams where consumers won online auctions and paid money but never received the merchandise. The phantom items included designer handbags, dental equipment, plasma televisions, and a diamond, according to regulators.

Christine Gregoire, Washington state's attorney general, said many victims of Internet auction fraud are vulnerable because they pay with cash or money orders.

"Our single biggest piece of advice is three things: Use your credit card, use your credit card, use your credit card," she said. Credit card companies offer additional protections against fraudulent transactions.

Many of the scams occurred on eBay because of the large volume of auctions there, Beales said. He said eBay has cooperated with law enforcement to combat auction fraud.

Kevin Pursglove, an eBay spokesman, advised consumers to check the feedback ratings given to auction buyers and sellers before doing business with them.

"eBay is a marketplace," he said. "Users should educate themselves about the culture and practices of the marketplace."

The FTC said that in one case a man stole identities to cover his tracks when he failed to deliver to winning bidders. The man allegedly opened bank accounts and post office boxes using identities from the records of a suburban Chicago hotel and the names of people he didn't like.

A federal court in Chicago ordered a halt to the scam and froze the man's assets so they can be used to repay victims, the FTC said.

The scam operators who tricked Skinner out of his laptop created an online escrow service called Premier Escrow that was supposed to prevent fraud by holding auction payments until winning bidders could receive and inspect merchandise they had won, the FTC said. The scammers allegedly acted as both buyers and sellers and directed transactions to the fraudulent escrow service so they could steal consumer payments and merchandise.

The FTC said a federal court in Virginia has ordered a halt to that scam, dismantled the scammers' Web site and frozen the defendants' assets pending trial.

Recording Industry Targets Kazaa Users

The recording industry has tapped into two Internet file-swapping services to warn people trading music they were breaking the law.

The Recording Industry Association of America, a trade association, will collect the names of those it suspects are swapping copyright material with the Kazaa and Grokster file-sharing services, RIAA President Cary Sherman told reporters during a conference call Tuesday. Grokster president Wayne Rosso said he's not worried about losing users. "This is a death rattle. It doesn't bother us, because we are very anti-copyright infringement anyway," Rosso said. "They think they're harassing us. No. What they're doing is declaring war on our users."

The tactic is the latest in the industry's battle to curb the illegal duplication of copyright works. Sherman said it does not involve pursuing legal action against those whom the industry suspects are pirating music. In a separate action, the RIAA has sued four college students who allegedly offered more than 1 million recordings over the Internet, demanding damages of $150,000 per song.

Kazaa, owned by Sharman Networks Ltd., and Grokster Ltd. distribute peer-to-peer software that allows users to search other users' computers for song, movie and other types of files. It also allows users to contact each other through a text messaging feature.

The RIAA is able to reach the services' users by employing a computer application designed to work with the peer-to-peer software. The program allows the RIAA to conduct automated searches of 100-200 of the most popular or most traded song titles on the services.

Users identified as having those songs on their computers, enabled for swapping, are sent the RIAA's message:

"COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT WARNING: It appears that you are offering

copyrighted music to others from your computer. Distributing or downloading copyrighted music on the Internet without permission from the copyright owner is ILLEGAL. It hurts songwriters who create and musicians who perform the music you love, and all the other people who bring you music."

The message warns users that they are not anonymous, can be easily identified and are at risk for legal penalties. It suggests the user disable the file-swapping software.

Sherman said that only Kazaa and Grokster users who have their peer-to-peer software set for file sharing are being targeted at this point. No decision has been made on whether to expand the campaign to users of other file-sharing services, Sherman said.

The industry plans to send out about 1 million messages per week, Sherman said.

Rosso said Grokster users can change the software settings to block text messages if they wish. The Nevis, West Indies-based company will not try to block the RIAA from contacting its users, Rosso said.

Sharman Networks likened the RIAA campaign to spam meant to confuse users.

A federal judge ruled last week that Grokster and another file-sharing service, StreamCast Networks Inc., are not to blame for any illegal copying users of their services do. A suit brought by music companies and movie studios against Kazaa is pending.

Media analysts say up to 61 million Americans use Internet services such as Kazaa to download copyright material. Such downloads are blamed in part for a 20 percent drop in sales of CDs and DVDs from 2001 to 2002.

U.K. Arrests 'Fluffi Bunni' Hacker

British authorities arrested a man Tuesday believed to head a group of hackers known as "Fluffi Bunni," which used a stuffed pink rabbit to mark attacks that humiliated some of the world's premier computer security organizations.

Fluffi Bunni captured the attention of the FBI just days after the Sept. 11 terror attacks, when thousands of commercial Web sites were vandalized with a single break-in that included the message, "Fluffi Bunni Goes Jihad."

The FBI characterized the act in a November 2001 report as an anti-American cyberprotest against the war on terrorism.

Lynn Htun, 24, was arrested by Scotland Yard detectives on outstanding forgery charges while attending a prominent trade show in London for computer security professionals, InfoSecurity Europe 2003, authorities said.

British authorities did not mention of Htun's alleged hacking. A U.S. official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Htun is wanted in America in connection with a series of high-profile hacking cases blamed on Fluffi Bunni. Investigators believe Htun was the group's leader and referred to himself as Fluffi Bunni, the official said.

Authorities in London indicated they would release more information Wednesday about Htun's arrest, although the continuing investigation into Fluffi Bunni hackers was sensitive and other arrests could be possible.

Fluffi Bunni embarrassed leading Internet security organizations by breaking into their own computers and replacing Web pages with a message that "Fluffi Bunni ownz you" and a digital photograph of a pink rabbit at a keyboard. The attacks, which began in June 2000, lasted about 18 months, then stopped mysteriously and created one of the Internet's most significant hacker whodunits in years.

"I thought he'd never be caught," said Jay Dyson, a consultant who formerly helped run one of the victim Web sites. "He was clever and had the patience of a saint. The targets he chose were ones that were really high profile, and ones you'd think would be above reproach when it comes to issues of security."

Victims have included the Washington-based SANS Institute, which offers security training for technology professionals; Security Focus, now owned by Symantec Corp.; and Attrition.org, a site run by experts who formerly tracked computer break-ins. Other victims included McDonald's Corp. and the online security department for Exodus Communications Inc., now part of London-based Cable & Wireless plc.

"The guy was playing a game of 'gotcha.' He wanted to prove that even firms that specialize in security can be hacked," said Mark Rasch, chief security counsel for Solutionary Inc. and a former Justice Department cybercrime prosecutor. "It's like someone who robs banks to prove that banks can be robbed."

Brian Martin, who ran the Attrition site with Dyson and others, said Fluffi Bunni quickly generated a fearsome reputation across the underground because of the group's choice of targets. Martin determined that a hacker broke into another user's computer, allowing him to assume that person's digital identity and briefly take over the Attrition site with a Fluffi Bunni message.

"He would break into companies that are there to secure you," said Martin, who never reported the crime to the FBI. "It's a challenge, and there's some irony behind it."

Targets frequently were attacked indirectly. Instead of trying to break into the heavily protected Security Focus Web site, someone hacked an outside computer that displayed advertisements on the site. The ads were replaced with taunting messages and images of the pink rabbit at the keyboard.

Klez Continues to Spread

The infamous Klez worm has retained the top spot in security firm Sophos's most frequently occurring viruses table for the fifteenth month in a row, while 475 new viruses were discovered in April.

Two old favorites also reared their heads again - Lovegate-E and Funlove - spreading concern that individuals and companies are not keeping their antivirus software and firewalls up-to-date.

"It's no good installing the software if it's not maintained," says a Sophos spokesperson.

A new virus called Datemake Dialler also made its way into the top ten. The malware, known as a dialer, is programmed to dial a premium-rate telephone line, typically with the intent of gaining access to adult material.

"Businesses should apply strict computing guidelines to avoid getting stung by a huge telephone bill and embarrassed by these seedy programs," says Graham Cluley, senior technology consultant at Sophos.

Top viruses were:

1. W32/Klez-H, 12.7 percent of complaints

2. W32/Lovgate-E, 4.9 percent

3. W32/Bugbear-A, 4.3 percent

4. W32/Sobig-A, 3.3 percent

5. W32/ElKern-C, 2.9 percent

5. W32/Yaha-E, 2.9 percent

5. W32/Yaha-K, 2.9 percent

8. JS/NoClose, 2.1 percent

9. W32/Flcss, 1.9 percent

10. Dial/Datemake-A, 1.6 percent

Webby Awards to Be Held Online

The Webby Awards, once hailed as the Oscars of the Internet, are being scaled down. This year's bash will be held online.

Nominees apparently expressed concerns about traveling to San Francisco for the planned June ceremony once a glitzy, celebrity studded extravaganza.

"With our nominees now reflecting a truly global Web we're facing new considerations, especially in light of everything that's going on in the world right now," said Maya Draisin, executive director of The Academy of Digital Arts and Sciences, which organizes the awards. "This is a challenging time for people in any business at this point."

The awards honor the best of the Internet, and during dot-com boom years the ceremony's pomp testified to the irreverence and creativity of the online community.

Since Webbys were first handed out in 1996, however, hundreds of Web sites have shut down, many of them past winners.

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